

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BELGRADE 1308

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT YO

SUBJ: CROATIAN PARTY RENEWS ATTACK ON CHURCH

REF : BELGRADE A-708

1. IN PRE-CONGRESS STOCK-TAKING SPEECH TO CROATIAN
CENTRAL COMMITTEE SESSION MARCH 19, CC SECRETARY
JOSIP VRHOVEC, AFTER DISCOURSING AGAINST CENTRALIST
FACTION AND DANGERS OF EXCESSIVE NATIONALISM, WARNED
CATHOLIC CHURCH THAT ITS HIERARCHY HAS NOT SHOWN
EVIDENCE OF TURNING AWAY FROM CONSERVATIVE AND
MILITANT LINE, "THE NORMAL CONSEQUENCE OF WHICH WILL
CONSIST OF APPROPRIATE COUNTER-MEASURES FROM OUR SIDE".
INTER ALIA VRHOVEC ACCUSED CHURCH OR PERSONS IN IT --
DISTINCTION BECAME BLURRED IN COURSE OF REMARKS -- OF
EXCESSIVE AND INADMISSIBLE IDENTITY OF CROATIAN
NATIONALITY (READ NATIONALISM AS WELL) WITH CATHOLICISM,
REVIVING OF STEPINAC'S "CULT OF HOLINESS", THREATENING
CRUSADES AGAINST YUGOSLAV SOCIAL SYSTEM IN PRINT, TAKING
UP DEFENSE OF FREEDOM IN YUGOSLAVIA IN CHURCH CIRCLES
ABROAD, TAKING BENEVOLENT ATTITUDE TOWARD PRIESTS WHO SOW
DISCORD AMONG FOREIGN WORKERS IN CONCERT WITH EMIGRE GROUPS,
AND, IN GENERAL, EXCESSIVE MILITANCY.

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2. ALMOST AS AFTERTHOUGHT, VRHOVEC ADDED THAT SAME COULD BE SAID OF SOME CIRCLES OF ORTHODOX CHURCH IN CROATIA, ADDING THAT THERE TOO SERBIAN NATIONALITY HAD BEEN IDENTIFIED TOO CLOSELY WITH ORTHODOX RELIGION.

3. COMMENT: VERBAL DUREL BETWEEN PARTY AND CHURCH LAST FALL OVER CONSTITUTION DRAFT (SEE AIRGRAM) SEEMED TO HAVE SUBSIDED IN RECENT MONTHS, VRHOVEC'S ATTACH, APPARENTLY TRIGGERED BY NO PARTICULAR INCIDENT, INDICATES THAT CHURCH NOT BEING SPARED IN PARTY'S CURRENT CAMPAIGN AGAINST ITS ADVERSARIES. WITH REFERENCES NOT ONLY TO NATIONALISM BUT ALSO TO CARDINAL STEPINAC AND CLERGY'S IMAGES OF FASCIST USTASHI, VRHOVEC HAS EVIDENTLY REOPENED QUARREL WITH VENGEANCE, ISSUING SINISTER THREAT TO TAKE COUNTER-MEASURES IN ADDITION. CHURCH WILL DOUBTLESS FEEL OBLIGED TO REPLY AND SOON, BUT RESPONSE WILL DEPEND ON VRHOVEC'S EFFECTIVENESS IN PROLONGING INTIMIDATION WE DETECTED AFTER TWO PARTICULARLY BRUISING ENCOUNTERS CHURCH LEADERS HAD WITH AUTHORITIES LAST FALL. TOON

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